REMARKS

Claims 1-22 are pending. By this response, Claims 1, 11, 21 and 22 are amended. Reconsideration and allowance based on the above amendments and following remarks are respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects Claims 1-22 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lathrop (U.S. Patent No. 6,288,743) in view of Takemura (JP Patent#11088672A/U.S. Patent No. 6,657,658 used as the translation thereof). This rejection, insofar as it pertains to the presently pending claims, is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action recognizes that Lathrop fails to teach the image data obtained at completion of the image processing at each of a plurality of middle stages being separately stored and separately filed in the storage medium and designating a desired processing stage out of an image processing sequence in which a plurality of processing stages are sequentially performed for processing the signals output from the imaging device, as recited in Applicant's independent claims. The Office Action, however, alleges that Takemura teaches these features absent in Lathrop and that the combination of Takemura and Lathrop teach Applicant's claimed invention, as recited in independent claims 1, 11, 21 and 22. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

Applicant respectfully submits that in the embodiments of the present invention, an image device captures image data and processes the data through a plurality of middle stages prior to the data being converted for displaying on a display device. At each of these middle stages, at completion of the image processing through the stage, the data is separately stored and separately identifiable in the storage medium which aids in obtaining and processing the data at a later time. The processing of the data through the middle stages is accomplished after the capturing of the image and prior to the image being converted for display on the display device.

In contrast, Takemura teaches a digital camera device in which an image is acquired by an image taking means 101, after which the image is displayed as a visible image on the monitor 11 by the display/confirmation means 102. After displaying the image, a user may then perform

certain image processing on the image data and store this image separately from the original image captured and initially displayed. See column 8, lines 23-56.

Takemura, however, does not teach or suggest a plurality of middle stages as recited in independent claims 1, 11, 21 and 22. Specifically, the middle stages being processed by image processing section after capturing of the image and prior to the image being converted for display on a display device. As stated in Takemura's teaching, the image is captured and then displayed prior to a user modifying the image. The modified image may then be stored as a separate file from the originally displayed image.

Thus, the combination of Lathrop and Takemura fail to teach, *inter alia*, an image processing section that that processes a plurality of middle stages of image processing which is accomplished after capturing of the image and prior to the image data being converted for display on a display device...the image data obtained at completion of the image processing at each of the plurality of middle stages being separately stored and separately identifiable in said storage medium, as recited in Claim 1.

Lathrop and Takemura also fail to teach or suggest, *inter alia*, a designating device for which a user designates a desired processing stage out of an image processing sequence, to which a plurality of processing stages are sequentially performed, for processing the signals outputted from said imaging device, the plurality of processing stages being performed prior to the display of the signals on the display device, as recited in Claims 11 and 22.

Lathrop and Takemura also fail to teach or suggest, *inter alia*, processing image data obtained at one of a plurality of middle stages of image processing for processing signals outputted from an imaging device, the processing of the one of the plurality of middle stages being accomplished prior to display on a display device, storing separately in a storage medium, the image data obtained at the completion of the image processing of each of the plurality of middle stages and storing, in a storage medium, information with the image data, the information

indicating from which middle stage of the plurality of middle stages the image data was obtained, as recited in Claim 22.

Therefore, in view of the above, Applicant respectfully submits that that combination of Lathrop and Takemura fail to teach each feature of the Applicant's independent claims. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

For at least these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 1-22 are distinguishable over the cited art. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Chad J. Billings, (Reg. No. 48,917) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Dated: January 30, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

By _____
Michael R. Cammarata
Registration No.: 39,491
BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP
8110 Gatehouse Road
Suite 100 East, P.O. Box 747
Falls Church, Virginia 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000
Attorney for Applicant

MRC/CJB/kmr/vd